

SELECTIONS
From the Writings and Sermons
of
David Willson

SELECTED BY
JAMES L. HUGHES

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SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS AND SERMONS OF DAVID WILLSON

CHAPTER I.

DAVID WILLSON'S VISIONS

I now transmit to the public, the services of the Closet without partiality to sect or assembly, for the eye of this world to hold.

And although I have not been able to write in the style of the Literaries, being deprived through poverty of those means which the more affluent in circumstances have received; nevertheless, I have tried to hint my sentiments so as they can be read by those that are not too speculative in literary skill, with hope they may find some small acceptance with a few.

In the visions of light, my soul saw a star like gold rise in the east, to the height of the sun, one hour after rising—while I was beholding its beauty with admiration, I saw another added with equal glory, and although words cannot describe their beauty,—my soul has been troubled till I above noted their remembrance—the events of these things are unknown; but my understanding is that a church will rise of a *sacred union both of the gospel and the law*, and these stars are an emblem of their glory and lustre that will shine to the world.

I apprehended I was called to retire into secret from all men. Accordingly I obeyed the call and went forth by myself. It was expressly spoken to me that if I would go I should see the angel of God. Half believing that such a thing should be, and still fearing the event of not going, I obeyed the command. According to divine promise, I saw a beautiful young man clothed in a scarlet robe. My understanding was enlightened in a moment. This was the blood of Christ Jesus, and a mission for me, or rather an evidence of confirmation to what I had already

too feebly believed. He stood at my left hand in reach of my person, and signified by motion this covering was for me. He gently stripped the garment from his own shoulders and laid it on mine, and told me that through the sorrows of sin I must minister to the Christian Church, and that this was redeeming blood that was laid upon me, which I must be baptized in. He disappeared from me naked and beautiful, and I saw him no more.

I returned sincerely confirmed in the belief that I had received a holy mission from God. During the appearance of the solemn countenanced angel I was accompanied with sorrow concerning the fall of Jewish glory, once offered to God, and thought by this mantle I should have part in the restoration of the Christian Church only, and no part with the Jewish order in God's holy habitation.

I will here note that I hitherto had received some hope in having part in the restoration of ancient glory, and therefore was the more grievously disappointed, as expecting by what I had received, I should have part in the Christian Church only. But I sorrowed no longer than the dawning of the next morning light, when I received the same call and retired again, and I expressly saw the same person in another garment colored as the skies, ornamented with the lights of heaven wholly, and sparkling with unusual lustre, with a border of gold compassing the mantle round about. I then stood in difficulty in my situation to know what was to be done with it, for I knew as before at the appearance it was God's visitation of great mercy to the restoring of ancient glory, which is long fallen. In an exceeding careful and gentle manner, he lifted up the first covering and placed the other in like manner as he had done before, under it, and I saw that Jewish glory was nearest to my heart, and the last visitations of God to His people, and that He would come hereafter, and dwell with them Himself, and receive all glory; I now had received an assurance that I had part both in present and ancient order, but that I must first ornament the Christian Church with all the glory of Israel and afterwards become nothing myself therein, but resign all to God's protection, for He, after me, would take care of His own people.

Throughout his writings, Mr. Willson expounds the old dispensation as much as the new, Moses as much as Jesus. He gives his reason for doing so in the following quotation:—

It is proper to inform my friends and acquaintances how I ever came to embrace such a spirit as this, that leadeth my mind

back to the tombs of a deceased people. Posterity is yet alive—it is not their spirit I pray for, but the heart of their fathers, that trusted in the living God.

The soul or mind is a spiritual house to dwell in and is the inner temple of the Lord.

Had I not given my heart to God for a habitation I might surmise I was misled, but I now otherwise believe that for my sacrifice (which is the heart) truth is revealed, and I dare not pass on without committing these things to paper which are written within, a law that no man seeth, nor none can read, save him to whom it is given.

My former services hath been partially confined to a small remnant of people, known by the name of the Children of Peace—selected from the world for good and great purposes. They were not chosen by men but of the Lord, they consist of good and evil, like the rest of the world—and differ in nothing save this, they collect into one body to worship and serve the Lord.

I now write for the whole earth, and give reasons for my hope, and explain the texts that I have afore written. The Lord is glorious in His habitation, that mansion called the mind. If I have conceived lies from a false spirit I shall be disappointed, but I doubt not, and write with confidence, although the world may believe me to be a liar.

I should not have written the above lines, but the world hesitates to receive my testimony, through suspicions that my singular language and handwriting are not true. I will proceed to give such convincing evidences of God's truth—as He hath given me, by which I am induced to believe, and am confirmed that I am a servant of that God or spirit that was before Israel was born of his mother into the world. I have ever written without any impressions of Scripture on the mind, yet I have made use of them, both in writing, and speaking to confirm the world that I was not ignorant of the sacred truths contained in them. I have had none acting as a parent to my spirit. God hath been all to me. I have beheld the patriarchs and prophets through the sacred lines, when I saw no more direction in them, than in a wilderness of souls, or combination of people here on earth. I despise nothing that is written by the inspired penmen of the Lord, but the Lord hath veiled the sacred book from mine eyes, and bid me proceed on from the law written in the heart, of which

the sacred writings testify should come to pass. And the day cometh that a man need not teach his brother, for all shall know the Lord, small and great.

* * * * *

I return to the text and plead with God. I have no mind nor might of my own; all are the Lord's, He will do as He will, and princes and potentates cannot obstruct His cause; we will now remove the veil and discover the naked truth; I am anointed and chosen for a cause unknown, and the Lord will not be obstructed in His purpose.

* * * * *

The spirit of God is pregnant with love to the world; but He is despised by the Christian church as a maiden slighteth a despised lover. For the same He will return to the tents of Jacob, and the house of Israel, and shew Himself more glorious in the east than ever He has done in the western world.

My spirit will follow the Lord to the tents of Jacob and find salvation there. A house will be built for my soul in Israel, and there will the gifts of God appear to me, that He hath concealed from the world.

CHAPTER II.

MESSAGES ON FIRST THREE FEAST DAYS

1ST—SEPTEMBER, 1830

Treasure not up riches amidst the cries of a weeping world; for the Lord has a moth in store for them.

* * * * *

Make mechanics of your own sons, and daughters. We are in a quiet land, far from sea shores, and traffics of vile speculation. Our home is in the shepherd's quiet tent, the place for religion to grow; it is the habitation of the Lord. Keep from all speculation, the Lord delights in justice, the Lord will curse that hand that deals by false weight and measure. The Lord will sing a pleasant song, from His place, it shall be heard in all the earth:—

Here truth and justice shall arise
As stars o'er-spread the bounded skies
O here shall rise His morning sun
His name be feared; His will be done.

* * * * *

Respect the poor, because he is poor, for this cheers his

lonesome feelings, and brings to light the abilities of God. Set him on thy right hand, his heart shall be a field of praise to thee, and rich shall be thy harvest for thy humble labor. If thou hast shown him mercy and respect thou hast sown a good seed in his heart. The product thereof shall be abundant—in blessing He will bless thee; in praise He will praise thee; thou shalt be the widow's joy and her children's friend.

* * * * *

Now to conclude, my friends and brethern, ye are the heritage of the Lord. Know his law and do His will, He will give you daily bread to keep the statutes herein written. He will not disappoint you in your trust, if ye deceive not the Lord by falsifying your word—and break His commands, but perform to the Lord thy faith, He will be with thee therein, and thy comfort shall be great in the land He hath given thee, and this shall be the pathway of the Lord's people, and the prospect of futurity to their children, that may go down to the grave in peace, when God calls our weeping eyes to fall asleep. Work not alone, any man, in the house of the Lord, but every man with his brother; that ye may be heirs, and joint heirs in the bonds of peace inseparable.

2nd—SEPTEMBER, 1831

Seek not to dwell on the hills and mountains of this world; that is, covet not the high places, where the princes and lords doth dwell. It is too high. There is a moth and canker at the root of high places. The end will not be glorious. Seek for wisdom, ask for grace, strength and truth to rebuild this house of Jacob's God, for it is fallen, one stone is not left upon another; that is, professing Christians are no higher than the level of the earth, that is the unreformed. Do not require judgment at my hands in earthly things. If my example of life hath been incorrect, when I was a shepherd and followed the flocks, discover the same to me, and we will reason on the subject, but if it hath been according to my daily advice since I have been a shepherd of the people, and you have seen nothing better under the sun, then you have had my example in low and straightened circumstances of life; and my precept when I have been entrusted with the grace of God. Do not call me back any more to make me a judge or divider in these matters; but, elders and councillors hold the scale of justice upon an even balance. I have done my part to restore to light and sense the house of the Lord. You have had good rules at the hand of God; you have had a tolerable

moderate example from one in low circumstances like yourselves, and if these things will not prevail to redeem from the unnecessary love of interest, I do not believe that God will give you more, or change His decrees for your crying. It is then time to repent of extravagance, and breaking the laws of God for interest.

* * * * *

Now we will conclude by saying that it was not wealth or grandeur that David or Solomon wished their children to seek after; these are small qualities and avail the wicked nothing. I wish aged men would note these last lines as well as the first. My writing hours are shortening, and my laborious ones are increasing in unknown parts of the earth. The advice of these two kings to their tender and beloved children, was to get wisdom and understanding and not forsake them, well knowing that deeds without wisdom are like actions without life. It dies in the birth. And deeds without understanding are as the footsteps of the blind, they see not what they do. I shall not burden my friends more with long writings; but write in secret for purposes to this age unknown. Hear what is given and live, and wash the house of the Lord in tears of repentance from the shame that is brought upon it for not receiving good doctrine; take heed to these sayings and live.

How beautiful, oh Lord, are these
That keep Thy house and Thy decrees.

Let Gold be dust or earth with thee,
Keep hands and feet from prison free,
And sense be with thee all thy days
To fear the Lord, and give Him praise.

3rd—SEPTEMBER, 1832

We cannot comprehend God's being, but we can discover some intercourse between the divine nature and ourselves. There is an inseparable chain of connection between God and man all the days of his life, after which he is dust and is in action no more.

The glory of God is what we want to know to satisfy the spirit of life that is within us; not as though we wanted to know Him glorified as a distant being, prince or potentate in life, but to know Him glorified in conjunction with the spirit of life that remains forever.

Lord, in Thy name I trust and sing
 And I rejoice in Thee
 My soul rides on an angel's wing
 Triumphantly and free.

There I behold the living spring
 And children rest in peace;
 The hand of David's on the string
 His harp doth never cease.

There I behold the cooling shade
 The weary rest at noon.
 I see the peace that God hath made
 And every harp in tune.

CHAPTER III.

GENERAL STATEMENT OF HIS RELIGIOUS OPINIONS

As we can believe in but one God, we believe Him to be a Spirit, and that flesh is not God at any time, but the offspring of the Lord, and is subject thereunto.

We believe that there is sin and righteousness, that sin is our own will, but righteousness the will of God. We believe that it is our own will that leads us into temptation, but the will of God that leads us out of it.

We believe that God hath made salvation possible with all men, and giveth unto us gifts according to our necessity.

We believe that all ordination to do evil is within the bounds of our will, and that all election to do well is wholly in the will of God.

We believe we have power to receive or resist the will of God, for which power we are accountable to our Creator.

We believe we cannot make ourselves perfect before God, but that our perfection consists in God's mercy, forgiving us all our sins, after we have done all we could.

We believe the Old and New Testaments to be a united line of information, to an enquiring mind, till we see ourselves humble and passive as dust before the Lord, of which we are created. These are both the gifts of God and the evidences of his unmeasured will forevermore.

We believe that God will chastise His own, and cut off the wicked from the work He hath given them to do.

We believe that God will make of all nations one people; that the mind is His tabernacle and His everlasting dwelling.

We believe that God will sanctify His people by His own Spirit and set them apart from all the earth.

We believe the day has begun in which righteousness will appear, and the sons and daughters of the Lord will be beautiful in His eyes.

We believe the Lord will no more cut off His people from the earth, but give them an everlasting name; and their song shall be holiness to the Lord.

We believe the Lord will place His name in the midst of them and execute judgment and righteousness for His own. We believe a day of everlasting trouble is coming on the proud of this world, and they will be cut off from the congregations of the Lord to weep forever. He hath made repentance possible for us all, we are not willing to repent, and the Lord is not willing to wait with us.

We believe Israel will be restored to his ancient beauty, and Jacob to his tent forevermore.

We believe the Lord hath chosen His place of abode and many will see His glory and rejoice in the salvation of the Lord.

We believe the Gentiles will come to Israel and worship in the tents of Judah from whence our Law-giver came. We believe the sun of righteousness is breaking forth to the perfect day, and that the morning star hath arose in Israel.

We believe that God is with His people, that He will dwell with them in spirit, and none will be able to take them from His hands.

We believe that the north and the south will meet together and sing for joy.

We believe that the east and the west will assemble into one centre, and as brethren serve the Lord.

We believe sorrow is in birth and will come forth in all the earth, and the righteous and the wicked shall sorrow together, till sorrow and sighing shall be no more.

We believe the pride of this world to be as dross which is good for nothing.

CHAPTER IV.

MEDITATIONS AND MUSINGS

Beautiful are Thy works, O God, we see Thy power and Thy glory in all the earth, we see Thy name in Thy Son, and worship Thee in blessings and praise forevermore. Men are at a loss without Thee, and have a necessity to enquire after Thee, and to know Thy tabernacle and Thy abiding place. Blessed is the man that asketh of Thy Son, for he hath to give such as Thou hast given him; He hath good tidings from Thee, and blessed is the ear that hears; but thrice more blessed is the heart that understands, and maketh Thy word the bread of life; all things are Thine, Thou hast created them, they are Thine to give and equally Thine to take away, and the depth of wisdom is in all Thy works.

* * * * *

The preparation for serving God is a willing mind; He called not any apostle that did not obey. He gave not the learned a pre-eminence over the unlearned, neither did He make the poor tributaries to the rich.

* * * * *

I do not believe that God was, is, or can be disappointed in the creation—but that all parts fulfil their appointed purpose, and God His.

* * * * *

God is part sorrow as well as joy, part anger as well as love; who can dwell with God and not know Him? He is part of all we are; we are not without Him nor He is not without us this side of the grave.

* * * * *

The mind in itself is not the original of sin, but as the gentle breeze moves on the waters and disturbs their quiet rest, so doth the things of this world impress the soul, that before sin was at rest. When the waters obey the storm, the rest is broken.

* * * * *

Death is a spiritual system or operation; the soul or spirit that God giveth doth not perish in death, but lives forever.

* * * * *

The spirit of the Scriptures is the great guide of the world, and I have well proved to them that hath known me, that I have not had a necessity that any person should teach me. The Scriptures lead all people to the spirit of them (that will receive

them) which spirit is God and is unlimited by the bounds of the earth, sea, or sky, much less than by the mind of man. Why am I not free to testify of the handwriting of the Lord on the mind, not saying that the mind contains a deity, but what He hath given is God with us.

The great intention of Scripture is to break a man off from following his own mind, that all his propensities may become servants to the house of the Lord. The soul is given to serve the Lord, as well as the person, by which God is glorified in both soul and person.

* * * * *

I have said the mind had no bounds, and this wise King found it so. Where we partake not of spiritual bread we are never satisfied, and all that is created will not satisfy the mind, for many have possessed more than the mind could govern to comfort or satisfaction, or was profitable to the soul; there is an endless thirst imposed upon the heart or mind of man which is never satisfied.

* * * * *

Let us believe more and we shall see more and more to the perfect day. Unbelief is a sin against God, and the worst that inhabits our habitation. Oh, how I could speak had the people a heart to believe! how we would travel forward were it not for cowardly diffidence, some afraid to sacrifice as though it were so much pruned off from their estates!

* * * * *

Now we must write about the temptation. It was nothing but silver or gold entering into the mind; the gold nor silver entered not—but the love of it. Now when we so plainly see revealed unto us by the life and death of Judas the fruit that the love of the world bears, is it not astonishing that so many young disciples enter into the same practice—selling the life of Christ for money—and the blood of the apostles?

* * * * *

That sacrifice that is retained is in store for cursing, the end is, to be burned with everlasting fire. The miserly sacrifice the souls of their children for the things of this world, and they put them away willingly from the house of the Lord; such parents will see sorrow in their latter days, their pillow will flow with tears and their spirit depart in grief.

* * * * *

The Lord wants a peculiar people of His own to write His

name upon, to heir His love and share His mercies that He hath in store for them that love and fear His name. He hath great treasures of love for the body as well as the souls of men; these are at hand, we may receive them if we will, or leave them for another; they will be given to this world, for God will write His name and power below to be blotted out no more.

* * * * *

God is of various spirits, from whence every various part hath or doth proceed; He is the spirit of the storm—He is equally the spirit of the calm. Were it not for God in the elements, the storms unresting would never cease; were He not in the calm, the storm would never rise. Now all we see is for the information of the man. God is the great master of the whole. To make the storm and calm agree is the salvation of the soul, for it leads us to a knowledge that God doeth this, and that everything is good in its season. Therefore God is an equal God—and one part reigns at a time. Thus hell maketh way for heaven, as thirst maketh the water sweet—or hunger maketh the crumb welcome to the soul.

* * * * *

I prepare as I am able before the living God for time to come. I have prepared for death many years ago—and such alone only are prepared to live. I do not speak boastingly nor of righteousness, but the fear of death and the terror of the grave is far removed from me. I only wish to live as I would like to die; that is, in the service of the Lord.

* * * * *

Religion will bud as the oak, and bring forth as the willow; she will be both strong and beautiful, her hands will reach the Islands of the sea, her seat will be on distant shores, the wave shall be the pillow of her rest, and the raging billows her Quiet place. The north wind will fill her sails and as a fair one will she return to her native home; the distant Isles will embrace her love, the nations will court her favors, and princes become her servants abroad; she shall grow as the tender grass bless'd with gentle dews, she will appear as the rose in showers of rain.

CHAPTER V.

POETICAL MUSINGS

David Willson wrote poetry after most of his published sermons.

The following are typical selections, of his more hopeful poems.

Hallelujah, sing my soul
 For thou art forever free!
 Storms may beat and tides may roll,
 Never shall they reach to thee.

Thou art where the prophet lies,
 Thou art where there's oil in store;
 Thou hast lights amidst the skies—
 These will shine forever more.

* * *

Why should mine eyes forever weep,
 Bless'd Israel doth say?
 Or why my limbs e'er fall asleep,
 Or turn again to clay?

The Lord's placed blessings on my head,
 That never will remove,
 And I am in green pastures fed,
 The pastures of His love.

* * *

A humble heart do I possess,
 Alone to God inclined—
 Like ground prepared for righteousness
 Is my whole heart designed.

I heard the wakening trumpet sound,
 But oh! what guilt I bore,
 For all my hidden sins were found,
 But God doth seek no more.

* * *

The lilies on the thorn shall grow,
 The fruitless tree shall yield,
 The soul shall gather that doth sow,
 Both reap and till the field.

His Church a pasture green shall be,
 His house a kingdom made,
 His spirit shall abide with me,
 And glory crown His head.

* * *

Lord, at Thy feet I'll lie and rest,
 When winds and waters roar
 I'll lean upon Thy Holy breast
 Nor will I covet more.

In Thee alone my trust shall be
 On Thee alone depend,
 And all my days I'll worship Thee;
 For kings nor crowns contend.

* * *

I have a budding hope within,
 That yet is not in bloom.
 Thy goodness will forgive my sin,
 And shine as sun at moon.

* * *

Lord, from Thy hand I blessings crave,
 Thy tongue to teach, Thine hand to save,
 Thine eye to see me in distress,
 Thy love when I am comfortless,
 Thy care to keep my soul from sin,
 Thy dwelling place to take me in,
 Thy mercy to my heart restore,
 Thy will my life forever more,
 Thine ear to hear me when I pray,
 Thy wrath to drive my foes away,
 And all Thou art to keep me clean
 From everything that's low and mean.

* * *

Return to childhood, haste away,
 My soul that dwells with me this day,
 Nor in the bursting bud believe
 Let not the spreading flower deceive,
 For fruit will never more appear
 That will content thine eye and ear—
 It is decreed that thou shall thirst
 Till turned to God that made thee first.

* * *

Let me forever live alone
 And in some lonesome desert die,
 My grave to every age unknown
 But God alone know where I lie.

My days are full of trouble here
 My soul has no delight to stay,
 Mine eyes doth flow with many a tear
 Mine house a trembling frame of clay,
 My kindred don't my spirit own,
 My friends are trembling, and they're few;
 I seek my footsteps all alone
 I early rise and tread them too.

* * *

Lord, sanctify my mournful hours
 Although my days be few.
 Acquaint my heart with heavenly powers
 With Thy salvation, too.

Redeem my soul from every guilt,
 From every blot and stain,
 And make my hardest thoughts to melt
 And tremble at Thy name.

* * *

Though earth with sorrows doth abound
 And tears our eyes o'erflow,
 Still let the harp of David sound—
 Our feet tread Jordan through.

Behold the angry billows rise,
 Unbidden, too, to cease—
 To wash our dull, unseeing eyes
 To see the land of peace.

* * *

Prepare O God, my heart I pray,
 To drink deep sorrows in,
 For these will drive my mirth away
 Nor tempt my soul to sin.

Prepare my heart to taste and see
 What grief my fathers bore;
 Prepare my mirth away to flee
 Nor tempt my soul no more.

* * *

The grass shall grow around Thy throne,
 And in thy streams fresh waters run,
 Thine heart shall be the corner stone,
 Where Thy bless'd kingdom is begun.

King David o'er Thy tribes shall reign,
 Angels shall come Thy harp to play,
 And I will dwell with Thee again,
 Jehovah Lord and Majesty!

* * *

Tenfold, O GOD, Thy mercies are
 Beyond our frail desires,
 Beyond the bounds of formal prayer
 Or that the thought inspires.

Thou still conceals amidst the deep
 The gifts of grace and light,
 Most safe in store Thou doth them keep
 For these that walk aright.

* * *

Come to the throne and see
 That Jesus sits thereon.
 His spirit is the fruitful tree
 His name the chosen one.

Our wine is in His breast,
 Our bread and storehouse there.
 He'll lend us feet to walk, to rest,
 And strength our load to bear.

Impotent, lame, and blind
 My mournful soul appears,
 Long seeking that that's hard to find
 Through sorrow and through tears.

* * *

O God, the morning of the day,
 Speaks great salvation to my soul,
 The clouds of terror flee away,
 The seas in gentle motion roll.

The pastures flourish fresh and green,
 The springs of my salvation flow,
 There's lilies in the valleys seen,
 Their mantles are as white as snow.

There's doves upon the boughs at rest,
 No more my soul doth hear them mourn,
 My soul hath all her sins confessed,
 The glory of my days return.

* * *

The vesture of thy soul shall be
 Like all the earth, like all the sea,
 Of every living creeping thing,
 Thou shalt be lord, thou shalt be king.
 No monarch on thy throne shall reign,
 'Till David doth return again.
 The lights that shine within the sky,
 My love will to Thy heart apply,
 And in the roaring of the sea,
 My voice will speak again to Thee,
 The earth shall all Thy bosom know,
 To Thee all living come and go.
 Thy heart more perfect still shall be,
 Than all the earth, than all the sea,
 And every living creeping thing
 Rejoice in Thee their Prince and King.

